

Carrizo Plain National Monument Resource Advisory Committee (MAC)
January 27, 2007

Attendees:

RAC members: Carl Twisselman, Bob Pavlik, Ellen Cypher, Jim Patterson, Neil Havlik, Michael Khus-Zarate, Blair Knox, represented Ray Watson, Dale Kuhnle, Ray Hatch.

BLM: Patty Gradek, Johna Hurl, Kathy Sharum, Steve Larson, Larry Saslaw, Carlotta Allen, David Christy.

Managing Partners: Deb Hillyard, California Department of Fish and Game; Tom Maloney, The Nature Conservancy

Public: Geary Hund, Terry Frewin, Diana Daughters, Kathleen Buttke, Larry Buttke, Anne McMahon, Nancy Ryan, Lodema Hatch, Roger Gambs, Lorraine Unger, Craig Dentiche, Jeff and Tanya Reschke, Irv and Coralie McMillan, Alice Koch, Royce Larsen, Phil Compton, Pat Veesart, Pati Nolen, John Ruskovich, Jeff DeSmet, Sutton Edlich, Mark Fletcher, Kathryn Keller, David Braun, David Chipping, Cliff Garrison, Eric Greening, Betty Winholtz, Jon Cooper, Ryan Cooper, Della Barrett, Tina Salter, Blair Knox, Cal French, Mary Fullwood, Karl Striby, Sidney Silliman, Evy Cooper.

OPENING BUSINESS

Neil Havlik, committee chairman, welcomed the public and gave an overview of the MAC's role in advising BLM.

Johna Hurl, acting monument manager, made opening statements welcoming the committee members and public.

MAC members introduced themselves and gave a brief summary of their backgrounds. They are: Ellen Cypher, PhD, plant ecologist and research ecologist, Bakersfield; Neil Havlik, PhD, natural resources manager, San Luis Obispo; Raymond Hatch, former mayor, Taft; Michael Khus-Zarate, an educator and member of the Carrizo Plain Native American Advisory Council, Fresno; Dale Kuhnle, rancher, Carrisa Plains; Jim Patterson, San Luis Obispo County supervisor, Atascadero; Robert Pavlik, environmental planner, San Luis Obispo; Carl Twisselman, rancher and member of the BLM Central California Resource Advisory Council, McKittrick; and Raymond Watson, Kern County supervisor, Bakersfield.

Members of the audience and BLM staff introduced themselves.

Carl Twisselman, moved that Neil Havlik be elected MAC chair and Ellen Cypher be elected vice chair. Ray Hatch seconded the motion, which passed.

Patty Gradek, acting BLM Bakerfield Field Office manager said Ron Huntsinger had transferred to a job in Washington, D.C. She has moved from her job as assistant manager for minerals to acting manager until a new manager is hired. She stressed the importance of starting the planning effort with a new fresh perspective and a new start. The first phase of developing a plan will be the scoping process to identify issues. BLM intends to be open and inclusive with full public participation so the best decisions are made.

Johna Hurl reported the managing partners have been updating the cooperative management agreement in light of the monument proclamation. Members of the public asked about the possibility of an opportunity for public comment and getting a digest of the draft agreement. Neil Havlik asked if the partners could provide an outline of their joint understanding. The managing partners agreed to discuss what they could provide.

Larry Saslaw, BLM wildlife biologist, said a number of scientists have agreed to provide independent peer review of studies for BLM. They will provide independent review of management, monitoring plans, and research studies that are critical to successful adaptive land management. They are:

- Frank Davis (Remote Sensing/Geographer)
- Kennen-Wolf (Vegetation/ Avian Ecology)
- Brian Cypher (mammalogist, kit fox)
- David Germano (Herpetologist)
- Caroline Christian (Range Ecologist)
- Carla D'Antonio (Exotic Plant species)
- Jamie Bartolome (Range Science)
- Polly Shiffman (Fire Ecologist/ Disturbance Ecologist)
- Dan Rosenberg (Avian Ecologist)
- Justin Brashares (Mammalogist Large Animals)
- Travis Longcore (Insect Lepodopidrist)
- Jim Patton (K-Rats MVZ)
- David Pilliod (Herps.)

Roger Gambs, secretary of Friends of the Carrizo, provided an update of the group's activities. In April, 600 paintings were sold at the Carrizo on Canvas event at the Santa Margarita Ranch. In September, volunteers did cleanup, built trail and installed interpretive signs for National Public Lands Day. Friends had displays at the Condor Lookout Open House and the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. The Friends also clean the Carrizo Visitor Center before the start of the season each year. The group has set up a website www.carrizo.org and are developing a digital library that has prepared videos documenting different aspects of the resources. A newsletter will be distributed this spring.

Ray Hatch, former mayor of Taft and advisory committee member, discussed work establishing Taft as a gateway community. A visitor center has been set up in the Chamber of Commerce and Taft has received a grant to put up road signs. The Taft

Rotary Club has unofficially adopted Soda Lake Road and is picking up trash along the road. Efforts are underway to educate the Taft community about the Carrizo. There is discussion about developing an RV park in Taft for Carrizo visitors. Taft is about an hour from the monument.

Johna Hurl summarized planning efforts to date on the Carrizo. Before the monument proclamation, the Carrizo was managed with the partners as a Natural Area. An activity-level Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared and incorporated in the Caliente Resource Management Plan. BLM was preparing to do another EA for the Carrizo, but instead decided to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on the level of public interest and the complexity of the issues. Members of the public and committee expressed concerns that BLM may not have adequate resources for the planning effort. Patty Gradek said the office is comfortable with the support provided to date and expects to have adequate resources.

Members of the public commented that relevant information from the previous document should be used in the new process and issues identified previously should be incorporated. BLM staff said relevant information prepared from the EA, as well as other documents, will be incorporated. Steve Larson said BLM doesn't want to lose track of previous comments, but the EIS is a new process. Those who want to be sure their comments are addressed should submit them in the scoping process, even if they provided them for the EA. Committee members discussed how to carry information forward into the new process. Neil Havlik said the sense of the committee is that BLM should include, at least for review purposes, comments from the previous process.

A member of the public commented that BLM should allow adequate time for the public to participate in the comment period, even if it lengthens the process. A member of the public asked what is used to measure ecosystem health - threatened and endangered species or the whole ecosystem.

A member of the public asked if there would be a joint EIS/Environmental Impact Review (EIR). Deb Hillyard from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) said there had been some discussion of an EIR, but there would not be a joint document. CDFG has three units in the monument and one outside. CDFG plans to prepare a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document in the same timeframe as the BLM EIS, but is still working on how they will link. Activity level actions are addressed by the Carrizo Ecological Reserve Plan.

Johna Hurl outlined the planning process schedule. The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS is being reviewed in Washington, D.C. Scoping meetings are planned in the March through May period in Bakersfield, the San Luis Obispo area and the Carrisa School. The Draft EIS release is planned for late 2007, which will be followed by a protest period and 90-day Governor's review. The Record of Decision is scheduled to be released in late 2008.

Members of the public commented that a meeting should be held in Atascadero or Paso Robles rather than San Luis Obispo, that the plan should include benchmarks and that one scoping meeting be held in an area with a large population such as Los Angeles. Robert Pavlik suggested BLM run ads announcing the meetings.

A member of the public asked if future advisory committee meetings would be announced and open to the public. Neil Havlik responded in the affirmative and stated that the original idea was to have committee members host the meetings. The committee would convene and possibly make recommendations at the end of the final scoping meeting. He would like the public to consider the committee as a conduit to BLM.

Geary Hund of the Wilderness Society said they are considering nominating the Carrizo plain as a World Heritage Site. The World Heritage Council only accepts nominations once every 10 years and nominations are Due April 1. With outstanding natural features such as the San Andreas Fault and long human history, they believe the Carrizo qualifies. The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., talked to Interior and BLM officials there and found they also were considering nominating the Carrizo. There are 20 World Heritage Sites in the United States. Two, Yosemite and Redwoods national parks, are in California. The designation would provide recognition and prestige. It would raise the monument's profile and attract visitors. It would make it easier to get grant money and other funding. Nominations go to the Park Service and State Department before going to the World Heritage Council. The council will designate one site per year beginning in 2009. The designation would not change the legal status of the monument or management prescriptions.

Committee members and members of the public engaged in a lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of a designation. Carl Twisselman and Jim Patterson said increased visitation due to the designation might mean the Carrizo would lose some of its values.

Ray Hatch said the City of Taft supports the proposal, but the committee and public must develop a plan to protect the monument.

Ellen Cypher said the BLM has limited staff and she has concerns drawing attention to the Carrizo could increase problems such as rock art vandalism. If an organization supports the idea they should follow up and help BLM get additional resources.

Michael Klus-Zarate said there are world class cultural artifacts on the Carrizo and protecting them needs to be balanced with sharing them with the public. Artifacts are protected at this time largely through passive measures such as blocking a trail. Increased visibility could bring increased problems such as pot hunters.

Dale Kuhnle said he doesn't have confidence in the World Heritage Council and land managers have a lot to deal with without the added visibility from the designation. The designation could bring higher taxes and more bureaucracy.

Neil Havlik said the sense of the committee was that BLM staff work with the Wilderness Society to start the nomination process in light of the short timeline and keep committee members informed. If it is decided the designation would not benefit the monument, the nomination can be withdrawn.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Cal French said BLM has a golden opportunity to treat the area as something unique. It should be managed in line with the proclamation to bring back native species and do it in a scientific way. His interest is wilderness and he would like to see Caliente Mountain and areas in the southeast part of the monument designated. His concerns are Caliente Ridge Road and water guzzlers.

Craig Deutsch said the landscape should be kept as natural as possible. The committee should be active in preparing the plan. BLM should involve the public beyond that required by regulations.

David Chipping of the Native Plant Society said there should be species-based goals with science-based benchmarks to achieve them. There should be a fall-back position if the plan doesn't work. Scientific peer review shouldn't just be an internal process. It should be opened up with conferences and work with university programs such as the California Polytechnic University range program.

Geary Hund said Carrizo is the largest remnant of the Central Valley ecosystem. The plan will guide the management for the next 20 years, so deferring tough decisions could have irreversible consequences.

Pat Veesart from Los Padres ForestWatch submitted a letter. The planning effort provides BLM an opportunity to refocus on conservation rather than multiple use. (attachment Veesart)

Patty Nolan visited Carrizo as a youngster and now owns a house north of the monument. BLM has done an outstanding job with the constraints it operates under. San Luis Obispo County has failed to provide adequate services. There has been no oversight of grazing and therefore Valley Fever has increased. Cars and other garbage have been dumped and Kit Foxes have been killed. There should be buffer zones around the monument.

Enrico Bongio heard about conditions in the early 1950 and set up a committee to try to increase wildlife numbers, especially birds. According to a fauna survey in 1891, two hunters killed 8,400 quail at a spring in the temblor Mountains. Sheepherders later put in water tanks and livestock overgrazed the Carrizo. Conditions on the Carrizo need to be returned closer to what they were originally.

A member of the public and his wife own 160 acres within the monument that has been in his wife's family for more than 100 years. He would like to sell the land to BLM so it remains in its present condition, but the current appraisal is too low. If he can't reach an

agreement, he plans to put the property on the market in the spring. San Luis Obispo County would allow two residences and their family members could add additional houses.

Eric Greening said various experiments with grazing have been tried on the Carrizo. Any experiment needs a control to evaluate how it is working. BLM should not implement a wholesale approach until there is adequate time to get results. Different approaches should be tried in different areas. Fire management has moved from suppressing all fires to using fire as a management tool. Areas should be left undisturbed so thatch and humus can be observed.

Anne McMahon, a former reporter who wrote stories on the Carrizo, said she hoped reforming the committee and starting an EIS would be a new start. People should honor the past, appreciate their differences and realize the Carrizo is bigger than any individual.

Coralie McMillan said the political power of the grazing industry on the Carrizo needs to be controlled. Uses such as grazing and hunting should be fenced out of some large pieces of land.

Irv McMillan said the existing management plan doesn't adequately address the influx of people and roads need to be closed. The plan should pull away from intensive management: intensive grazing, fire suppression, farming and herbicides.

Sutton Edlich, San Francisco, said he had been a friend of Marlene Braun since graduate school. The key concern is whether grazing should be allowed or not and how to arbitrate that dispute. Time is needed to experience a range of wet and dry years and determine what is working. How to measure the evidence also needs to be determined. Buffer zones should be considered because some people kill endangered species to avoid possible actions by the government on their property.

Mark Fletcher, a quail hunter and Central Coast resident, said he favors whatever would allow wildlife habitat to flourish.

Mary Fullwood said some residents in California Valley kill animals coming onto their land from the monument and San Luis Obispo County doesn't show respect for the residents.

Steve Beck, a Carrizo Plains rancher whose family settled there in the 1860s, said managers need to make decisions based on unbiased and objective facts. Economic issues need to be considered: jobs, property tax levels, hunting license sales and retail sales. Multiple use should be encouraged. When the monument was created Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Congresswoman Lois Capps were adamant multiple use would not change. Weather has had the biggest influence on wildlife and grasses. There is not rampant grazing on the monument. He presented two publications to the committee: "Grazing for Change" compiled by the California Farm Bureau Federation and "Grazing Handbook, a guide for resource managers in coastal California" from the Sotoyome

Resource Conservation District. He also provided a list of grazing research papers (attachment Grazing).

David Braun, a local resident, said the MAC is a way to influence the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Bakersfield Field Office. Since the RMP has a long life, managers should avoid mistakes that will take decades to fix. Human activity has the biggest impact on the Carrizo, off-highway (OHV) vehicles, oil and grazing. Oil and grazing should not be allowed on the Carrizo. BLM should manage the Carrizo for a narrow range of uses rather than the full spectrum.

Terry Frewin, Santa Barbara, a regular Carrizo visitor, said multiple use does not mean all uses in all places. Motorized vehicle use is increasing and the plan needs to address OHV use. The Carrizo also needs more law enforcement.

Don Dollar could not attend and at his request Patty Gradek read the following message: I am interested in a Carrizo Plains NM that is managed in way that public participation is encouraged. Please see attached email. I have been trying to get information on the upcoming meeting, and here it is only a few days before the meeting, and I can not even get an agenda. Also, trying to stay informed on upcoming planning seems to put the burden on the public to try and find out or guess when the BLM is going to do something.

I request that the Advisory Committee request that the BLM make the whole process for the Carrizo Plains NM more open and reach out to the public in the process. The BLM should maintain a list of interested persons and contact them in a timely fashion when there are to be meeting, plans, etc. for Carrizo Plains NM. So far, this whole process lacks transparency.

I would love to comment on whatever the meeting is going to be about - but I have to guess at this point.

The best things that can happen for Carrizo Plains NM are: Many fewer cattle, roads and fences.

CONCLUDING REMARKS BY MAC MEMBERS

MAC members thanked members of the public for attending the meeting and their comments.

Jim Patterson: The diversity of comments has helped the Carrizo managing partners. If the managing partners need additional resources they should contact the MAC for support.

Ray Hatch: As a new MAC member, the comments helped him get up to speed. There is a lot of interest in the Carrizo by Taft. He gave Johna Hurl a 1962 report on the geology of the Carrizo Plain and san Andreas Fault.

Blair Knox represented Ray Watson the Carrizo shouldn't be considered as a separate place. Growth in the Central Valley will affect the Carrizo. The monument is owned by the public and should have public access, but managed so there is accountability. Federal elected officials should have the staff involved.

Dale Kuhnle: Grazing is the major point of contention. Some comments have given the impression the Carrizo has been "raped and pillaged" by livestock for 120 years. BLM and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) only obtained the property 20 years ago. For 100 years before that it was in private ownership. All the plants and other species were there after that time, so not grazing is not the answer. Nature is the biggest factor. The Carrizo only receives three inches of rain on the average. BLM and TNC took some areas out of grazing when they obtained the property and have allowed grazing in some areas since then, so there are observable control areas.

Michael Klus-Zarate: He appreciates the quality of the comments and looks forward to hearing more. The Tribal Elder was unable to attend, but the tribe will be involved.

Carl Twisselman: He has heard similar arguments regarding other issues while a member of the BLM Central California Resource Advisory Council. In the end, the parties will compromise to reach a decision.

Bob Pavlik: he encourages public outreach. There should be a mechanism to reach the public in the research peer review and a way to link it to the planning effort.

Neil Havlik: The MAC and its members can serve as a conduit between BLM and the public.

The next MAC meeting will be held in conjunction with the scoping meeting at the California Valley Community Service District building next to the California Department of Forestry fire station 42, May 5.